

**Amendments to the Specification**

*Please replace the paragraph starting at page 3, line 11, with the following amended paragraph:*

In another aspect, the invention provides methods for forming a gate electrode. In one embodiment, the method comprises exposing a gate oxide (dielectric) layer disposed on a silicon substrate to a silicon-containing species at a low partial pressure of about  $10^{-2}$  Torr or less to deposit a layer of about 10 to about 20 angstroms silicon; and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing species to form a silicon nitride barrier layer. In one embodiment, the silicon layer can be thermally annealed in a nitrogen-containing species, preferably at a temperature of about 700°C. to about 900°C. In another embodiment, the silicon layer can be exposed to a plasma source of nitrogen. The method can further comprise forming a conductive polysilicon layer comprising a conductivity enhancing dopant such as a boron dopant over the nitride barrier layer, and additional layers as desired including, for example, a metal silicide layer such as tungsten silicide ( $WSi_x$ ), a barrier layer such as titanium nitride (TiN), a conductive metal layer such as tungsten (W), and an insulative nitride cap. The nitride barrier layer inhibits passage of the dopant (e.g., boron) from the conductive polysilicon layer into the gate oxide layer.

*Please replace the paragraph starting at page 7, line 23, with the following amended paragraph:*

The resulting nitride layer 20 functions as a barrier to inhibit the passage of a conductivity enhancing dopant (e.g., boron) through the gate dielectric layer from an overlying doped (e.g., boron-doped) gate polysilicon layer into the substrate 12.